

For My Mother, Hidden

She was flaming water back then, my mother —
burning drownings preading, breathing
god-sized gusts of fear into my child void.
She spun through days like a dervish amok,
washing walls clothes windows floors
baking dusting Lysoling vacuuming ironing.
She was never young, and she never smiled
except for photographs.

Once she said to me in a voice of blue-white intensity:

"I would eat shit

if I could sit across from my mother
like you're doing right now."

Another time, she said:

"Remember only love when you remember your childhood."

Only that? Had she forgotten: her small fists
hammering up and down up and down on my back
while she screamed fucking kid fucking kid,
holding up the hot iron she was using
and threatening to put it to my tongue
or to the side of my face if I didn't stop laughing,
the soapsuds enemas she gave my brother and me once,
sometimes twice, a week?

I don't know her.

Don't know how to know her.

But this part of her I would love to dissolve in.

The part that told me this:

"Midnight one night, I wake to a sound. Water moved
by something other than current, you know? I see...

a buck and his doe have walked into the canal
to their chests and are drinking.

Something moves in me.

Like your first roll in my belly."

Rusty C. Moe